

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the recitations of claim 17, and claim 17 has been canceled accordingly. Claim 18 has been amended to change from depending on claim 17 to depending on claim 1.

Entry of the above amendment is respectfully requested.

Art Rejections

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-4, 6-10 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ichinose (US 2001/0028382 A1) in view of Takahashi (JP 2003073598 A) and Nojima (US 2002/0045035 A1). On page 13 of the Office Action, claims 5 and 11-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ichinose (US 2001/0028382 A1), Takahashi (JP 2003-073598 A) and Nojima et al. (US 2002/0045035 A1), and further in view of Yoshino et al. (US 5955185 A).

In response, and to expedite allowance, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the recitations of claim 17, which has not been included in these rejections. Accordingly, Applicants submit that these rejections have been overcome, and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Objection to Claims 17 and 18

On page 14 of the Office Action, the Examiner has objected to claims 17 and 18 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but has indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 17 and 18 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In view of the Examiner's indication, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the recitations of claim 17, so that claim 1 is in essence claim 17 rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim (there were no claims intervening between claims 1 and 17), and Applicants have amended claim 18 to depend on amended claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that this objection has been overcome, and withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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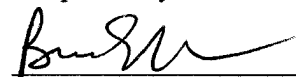
WASHINGTON OFFICE

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CUSTOMER NUMBER

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Respectfully submitted,



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